

REMARKS

The present application was filed on November 14, 2000 with claims 1-15. Claims 1-15 are currently pending in the application. Claims 1, 14 and 15 are the independent claims.

In the Office Action, claims 1-15 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,870,468 to Harrison (hereinafter "Harrison") in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,784,464 to Akiyama (hereinafter "Akiyama").

The Examiner also objects to the informal drawings. Formal drawings are included with this response. Moreover, the Examiner rejects claim 15 under 35 U.S.C. §101. Applicants choose to amend claim 15 to address the Examiner's concerns.

Applicants respectfully traverse the Examiners §103(a) rejection of claims 1-15. Applicants ask that the Examiner reexamine the present application in view of the following remarks.

Applicants initially note that a proper *prima facie* case of obviousness requires that the cited references, when combined, must "teach or suggest all the claim limitations," and that "there must be some suggestion or motivation, either in the references themselves or in the knowledge generally available to one of ordinary skill in the art, to modify the reference or to combine reference teachings." See MPEP §706.02(j).

Independent claims 1, 14 and 15 each describe the encrypting of one or more files "using a first cryptographic key associated with a current time interval for which the files are generated." In formulating the §103(a) rejection, the Examiner argues that this element of the claims is taught by Harrison. More specifically the Examiner states:

Referring to the independent claims 1, 14 and 15, the limitation "configuring the software program . . . such that one or more files generated by the program are at least partially encrypted using a first cryptographic key associated with a current time interval . . ." is met by file protection agent software (18) depicted in Fig. 2, which encrypts files with encryption key. The key is generated for the particular set of files (see Fig. 1) and the key is used in accordance with the preset time limit (see block 6). Therefore the encryption key is associated with the time interval, as recited in the instant claims.
(Office Action, p. 3, #6).

Applicants respectfully disagree. One skilled in the art will immediately recognize that the “association” between the encryption key (a.k.a., “cryptographic key”) and a time interval in Harrison is entirely different from that recited in the independent claims of the present invention. The time interval described by Harrison (block 6 of FIG. 1) is a “File Unprotected Time interval” which “will determine how long a file in the File Protection List . . . may remain unencrypted (or unprotected) after being closed” (Harrison, col. 3, lines 9-12). After this time period runs, a unencrypted file is automatically encrypted (see Harrison, col. 3, line 59 to col. 4, line 9; and FIG. 5, element 16). In Harrison, the encryption key utilized, therefore, does not directly depend on the time interval represented by element 6 in FIG. 1. Claim 1, 14 and 15, on the other hand, describe an entirely different type of “association.” In these claims, the cryptographic key used in encrypting the files does directly depend on the “current time interval” during which the encrypted files are formed. This variation in the cryptographic key from one time interval to another, in accordance with the invention, is a key element in enabling the invention to discourage the unauthorized use of software. See, for example, the specification, p. 3, lines 11-17.

Akiyama fails to remedy this deficiency in Harrison. Therefore, Harrison and Akiyama collectively fail to teach an encryption key associated with a time interval like that described in claims 1, 14 and 15, and these claims would not have been obvious at the time invention was made.

It is further noted that, with respect to providing a motivation for combining Harrison and Akiyama, the Examiner argues:

One of ordinary skill in the art would have been motivated to have a software program configured with the key associated with the time interval and provide periodic updates including encryption keys associated with subsequent time intervals as taught in Akiyama for eliminating the risk of the unlawful decryption thereof by a third party (see Akiyama column 17, lines 66-68).

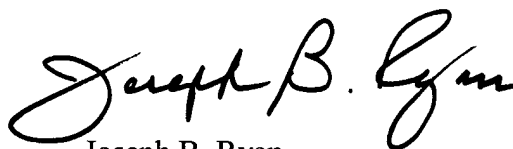
(Office Action, p. 4).

The Federal Circuit has stated that when patentability turns on the question of obviousness, the obviousness determination “must be based on objective evidence of record” and that “this precedent has been reinforced in myriad decisions, and cannot be dispensed with.” In re Sang-Su Lee, 277 F.3d

1338, 1343 (Fed. Cir. 2002). Moreover, the Federal Circuit has stated that “conclusory statements” by an examiner fail to adequately address the factual questions of motivation, which is material to patentability and cannot be resolved “on subjective belief and unknown authority.” *Id.* at 1343-1344. Applicants respectfully submit that this §103(a) rejection contains no such showing of objective evidence of record that would motivate one skilled in the art to combine the proposed references. Without characterizing Akiyama, Applicants submit that, without the use of hindsight, periodically changing encryption keys to eliminate unlawful decryption by unauthorized third parties does not motivate one skilled in the art to apply such a technique to software aging in accordance with the present invention.

In view of the above, Applicants submit that claims 1, 14 and 15 are in condition for allowance. Moreover, dependent claims 2-13 should also be in position for allowance over the references of record for at least the same reasons as claim 1. Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the §103(a) rejection.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Joseph B. Ryan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Joseph" and last name "Ryan" clearly legible.

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Joseph B. Ryan
Attorney for Applicant(s)
Reg. No. 37,922
Ryan, Mason & Lewis, LLP
90 Forest Avenue
Locust Valley, NY 11560
(516) 759-7517